

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reexamination and reconsideration of this Application, withdrawal of the rejection, and formal notification of the allowability of all claims as now presented are earnestly solicited in light of the attached evidence and remarks that follow.

Claims 1, 6, and 11-15 are pending. Claims 13 and 15 have been withdrawn from consideration. Applicants have amended claim 1 to correct a minor typographical error, to remove the fixedly engaging language, and to clarify that the radially-outward threaded surface of the collar extends axially through the second cutting blade. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, on page 8 (line 9-12) and in Fig. 4. A minor wording change suggested by the Examiner has also been made to claim 12. It is believed that the amendment to claim 12 addresses the claim objection presented in the office action. Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been introduced by this amendment.

I. Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112, First Paragraph, and Objection to the Drawings

Claims 1, 6, 11, 12, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Examiner alleges that there is no support for the collar being fixedly engaged to the second rotatable shaft, as set forth in claim 1. Similarly, the Examiner objects to the drawings as lacking an illustration of this particular feature. In order to expedite prosecution, Applicants have amended claim 1 to remove the recitation noted by the Examiner. Accordingly, the objection to the drawings and above-noted claim rejection are now moot. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and claim rejection are respectfully requested.

However, Applicants note that the Examiner appears to be grafting an additional limitation onto the claim by requiring the term “fixedly engaging” to mean abutting contact between the shaft and the collar. Applicants believe this is an unreasonable position and unsupported by the specification, which clearly refers to the collar being “fixed” with respect to

the shaft even where a key 21 is used.

II. Claim Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §112, Second Paragraph

Claims 1, 6, 11, 12, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner notes that the recitation “first sleeve” in line 18 of claim 1 appears to be inaccurate and should be changed to “second sleeve.” Applicants agree with the suggested change and, as noted above, claim 1 has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

III. Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1, 6, 11, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S. C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,172,326 to Hamilton. The Examiner alleges that the Hamilton reference discloses a splitter device including a collar and two sleeves as presently claimed. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that numerous recitations in claim 1 are neither taught nor suggested in the Hamilton patent. For instance, independent claim 1 recites a collar having the second rotatable shaft extending therethrough and a first sleeve and a second sleeve engaged with the collar. In fact, claim 1 recites that both the first sleeve and the second sleeve have a threaded surface that engages the threaded surface of the collar. In contrast, the device disclosed in Hamilton requires two separate split rings 20a and 20b, rather than a single collar. Each split ring 20a and 20b separately engages one of the nuts 30 and 34 in a threaded engagement.

Further, as clarified in claim 1, the radially-outward threaded surface of the collar extends axially through the second cutting blade such that the second cutting blade can be rotated around the collar in order to change the axial position of the cutting blade in an efficient manner. This aspect of the claimed design is also clearly not set forth in the Hamilton reference. Instead, the cutting blade 10 of Hamilton is directly engaged with the arbor 12 and the rings 20a and 20b are

positioned on either side of the cutting blade. Thus, the Hamilton reference does not disclose a collar extending axially through a cutting blade.

In operation, the Hamilton device would thus differ from the claimed invention. In the Hamilton device, as set forth in the last paragraph of column 2, axial adjustment of the slitter blade is accomplished by rotating the nut 30 positioned on first split ring 20a. Thereafter, the Hamilton reference describes mounting the other split ring 20b on the opposite side of the slitter blade and tightening nut 34 onto the split ring 20b so that it clamps snugly against the slitter blade.

In contrast, the present invention can provide axial adjustment of the cutting blade without removal of a collar or sleeve from the shaft as set forth in the Hamilton reference. Instead, the cutting blade can be adjusted by merely disengaging one of the sleeves from the cutting blade using the threaded engagement with the collar and then moving the cutting blade with the other adjacent sleeve to the proper position using the threaded engagement with the collar. Thereafter, the sleeve that was moved away from engagement with the cutting blade can be clamped back into an adjacent position to the cutting blade using the threaded engagement. Unlike the description of the adjustment process of the Hamilton reference, there is no need to remove components from the rotatable shaft, such as the split ring 20b as described in Hamilton, in order to accomplish adjustments to the cutting blade. In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

The Examiner has also rejected claim 12 as being unpatentable over a combination of the Hamilton patents and U.S. Patent No. 2,613,571 to Herman, relying upon the Herman reference as disclosing a pin configuration. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection as well.

As discussed above, the Hamilton reference fails to teach or suggest each and every limitation of independent claim 1. Thus, the obviousness rejection of dependent claim 12 must also fail for at least the same reasons noted above. Accordingly, Applicants also request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

It is not believed that extensions of time or fees for net addition of claims are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in documents accompanying this paper. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to allow consideration of

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this paper, such extensions are hereby petitioned under 37 CFR § 1.136(a), and any fee required therefore (including fees for net addition of claims) is hereby authorized to be charged to Deposit Account No. 16-0605.

Respectfully submitted,

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